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THE ANGEL BLESSING JACOB. See page 59.

PLEASANT PAGES
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BIBLE PICTURES

1781 FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.



BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE FARMER BOY;" "THE CASKET LIBRARY;" "JAMIE NOBLE;"
"THE FISHER BOY," &c., &c.

Z. A. Mudge

WITH TWENTY ILLUSTRATIONS

BY THE DALZIEL BROTHERS.

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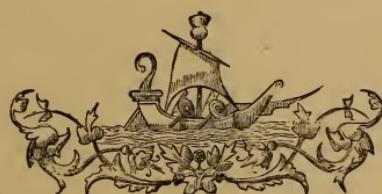
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P R E F A C E.

N offering this book of Bible Stories and Illustrations to the public the editor makes no claim of originality, but tells the old, old stories in simple language, and presents them in an attractive form, to please the taste of the Little Folks, for whom they are intended. The cuts are drawn in a free, bold manner, with little or no superfluous details, and are, it is believed, as faithful illustrations of the scenes they represent as can be presented. The editor trusts they may form an attractive addition to the juvenile literature of the day.





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THE CREATION OF THE WORLD.

THERE was once a time when this world, this firm earth, was not here. So the Lord God made the earth, and the sea, and the beautiful sky, and all the animals, and green trees. In fact, everything which we see, God made out of nothing. And we call this making of the earth, the Creation. God made all these things in six days, and he rested on the seventh, and called it the Sabbath, and commanded that we should all rest on his Sabbath Day, and keep it a holy day. After God had made the earth and all things in it, he made man, and the first man was called Adam. He then created a woman to be Adam's wife, and the name of the first woman was Eve. God gave Adam and Eve a beautiful place to live in, called the Garden of Eden, and they were very happy there, because they were good, and obedient to God; but afterwards they became sinful, and disobedient, and God sent an angel, with a sword in his hand, to drive them out of the garden. So they were obliged to leave their beautiful home, and wander forth and labor

hard, and to be sorry all their lives for their sin and disobedience. Remember this, dear children, that sin and disobedience are sure to be punished sooner or later. But this was not all of their punishment, for after a while they had two sons, one called Cain, and the other Abel. And Abel was good and obedient, and pleased God, but Cain was wicked; and when he saw that God loved Abel, he hated his own brother, and killed him. But God knew it all, and he cursed Cain, and sent him to wander over the whole earth, seeking rest, but finding none. What a terrible punishment to Adam and Eve, and to wicked Cain! But afterwards, when Adam and Eve were very sorry for their sin and disobedience, they had another son, and they named him Seth; and Adam lived to be very old indeed. He was nine hundred and thirty years old when he died; and by this time there were a great many people on the earth, some of whom lived to be older than Adam was when he died. Methuselah lived nine hundred and sixty-nine years, and was the oldest man that ever lived on the earth. In those days there was one very good old man, named Enoch, who pleased God by his obedience, and "God took him" to dwell with Him in happiness in heaven. God takes all good people to heaven when they die. Try to be good, my dear children, so that the good Lord will take you to dwell with him in Heaven when you die.



NOAH AND THE FLOOD.

AFTER the days of the good Enoch, who walked with God and pleased him, and who "was not, for God took him," men became very wicked upon the earth. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth;" "and it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man and beasts, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air."

"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord;" for Noah was a just man before all the people, and "he walked with God." Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

God told Noah that he would destroy all living things from off the face of the earth, and said: "Make thee an ark of gopher-wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch." "A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above. And the

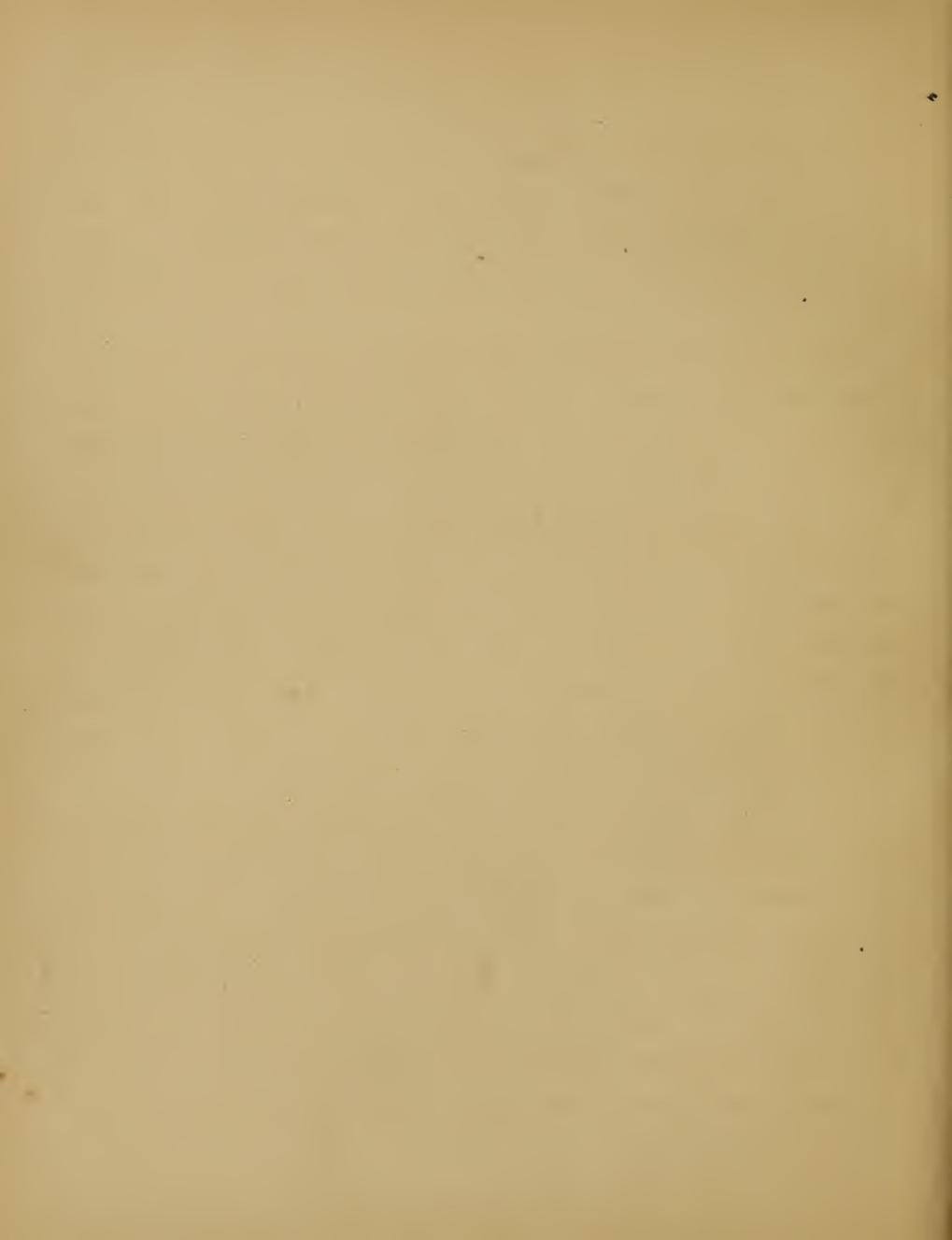
door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it." "And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female. Of fowls after their kind and cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee to keep them alive. And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee and for them. Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he."

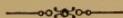
Besides the two of each sort of animals, Noah was commanded to take into the ark seven pairs of each of the kinds of beasts and fowls which were used for food and for sacrifices.

It was a long time after God gave Noah commandment to build the ark before it was completed; even one hundred and twenty years. During all this time Noah preached to the wicked people, no doubt, to bring them to repentance. (God gave them this opportunity to turn away from their sins, and thus escape the terrible punishment that was threatened. But they did not believe Noah's words. It is very likely that they laughed at him, and called his story of a coming flood the silly notion of an old man.) Perhaps when the good man was giving directions to the workmen, while they were at work on the timbers of the ark, they came and pointed at him, and laughed, as



BUILDING THE ARK.





they are represented as doing in the picture. At any rate, we know that "They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away."

When the one hundred and twenty years were ended, the Lord said unto Noah: "Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation. For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth. And Noah did according to all that God commanded him. And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth. And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark because of the waters of the flood."

And all the animals went in with Noah into the ark, as God commanded; "and God shut him in." Then "were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened." "And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased and bare up the ark, and it was lifted above the earth. And the waters prevailed and were increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the waters. And the waters prevailed

exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills that were under the whole heaven were covered;" "and the mountains were covered." "And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man; all in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died." "And Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark. And the waters prevailed upon the earth a hundred and fifty days."

Now the wicked people, who made themselves merry at the foolish notions of God's holy prophet, Noah, are having their time of deep distress. They flee to the highest mountains; but the flood follows them! Wicked children cling to their wicked parents; but the parents cannot help them! Those who mounted their horses, find that the horse is a vain thing for safety. The horse and the rider sink into the deep together. Some, who are higher up the mountain, lay hold of their drowning fellows and draw them from the waters; but it is only for a moment that they can save them. God's swift destruction pursues them. Oh, that they had heard his words which he spoke by Noah, and accepted mercy when it was offered! But now it is too late! So it will be with the sinner at the day of judgment. Now is the accepted time. Christ is the ark of safety. They who fly to him now



THE DELUGE.

will be safe when the heavens pass away with a great noise, and the earth and all that is therein shall be burned up.

Though he would not spare the wicked, God remembered Noah and his family, as they were floating away on the wide waters; and he caused the rain to cease, and stopped the great fountains. Then the waters decreased continually, until the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat. After this, the waters continued to decrease, until the tops of the mountains were seen.

"And it came to pass, at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark, which he had made; and he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth. Also, he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground. But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark; for the waters were on the face of the whole earth. Then he put forth his hand and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark. And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark. And the dove came in to him in the evening, and, lo! in her mouth was an olive-leaf plucked off; so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth."

No doubt, the dove seemed like a good friend to the eight persons in the ark. She brought them good tidings. The olive-



leaf, which she brought in her mouth, told them that peace had returned to the earth, which God had smitten. Perhaps they gathered round it as represented in the picture. This bird has ever been the sweet emblem of the love which God offers to a wicked world.

When Noah had waited, after the dove's return, seven days, he sent the dove out again, which returned to him no more.

Pretty soon, after this, Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked out upon the face of the earth. And he saw that the ground was dry.

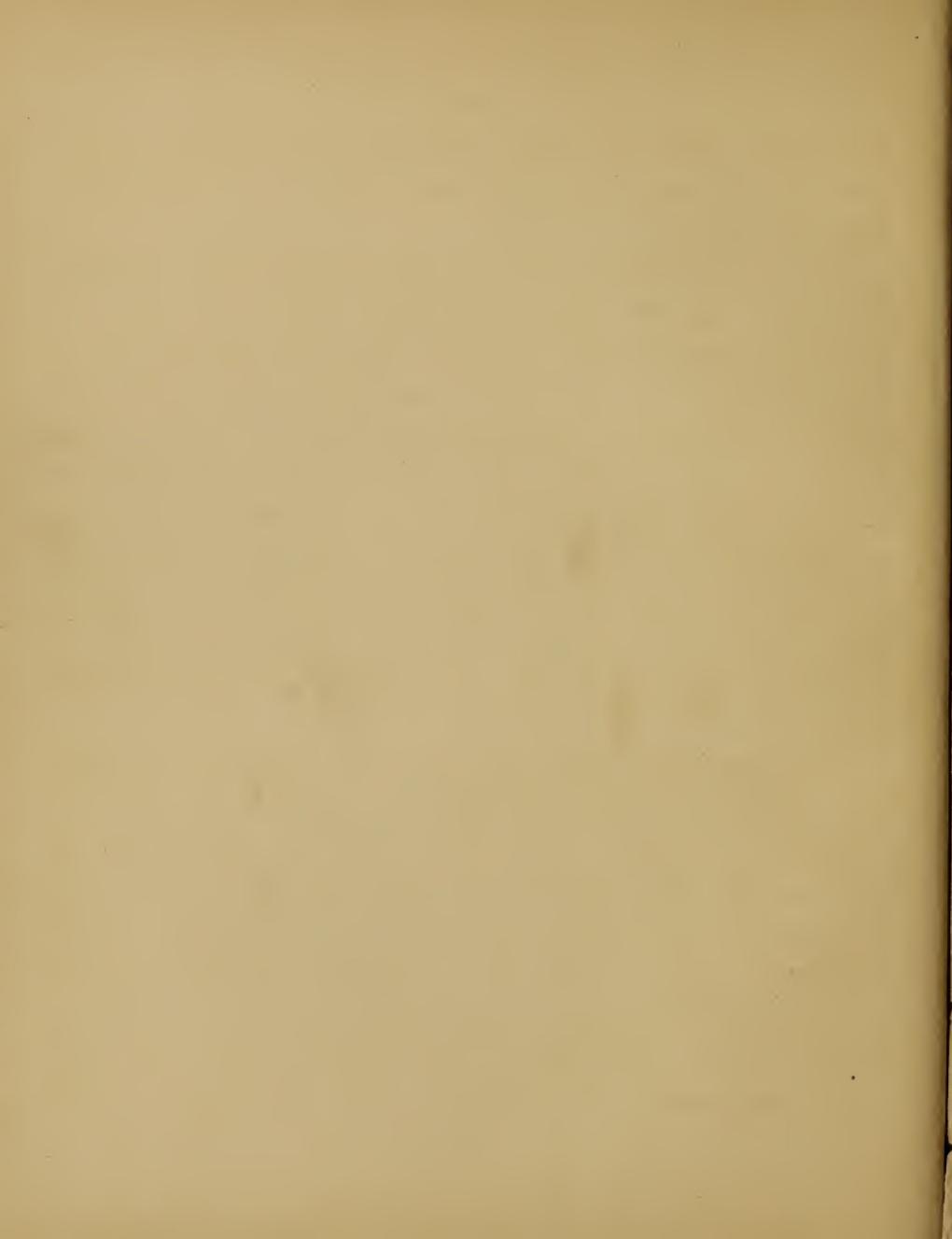
When he had been a whole year in the ark, God said unto him: "Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee; bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee, of all flesh, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful and multiply upon the earth."

"And Noah went forth, and his wife, and his sons, and his sons' wives with him; every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kind, went forth out of the ark."

When he had come out of the ark, Noah built an altar and offered sacrifices unto God. And God was well pleased, and said: "I will not any more smite everything living, as I



RETURN OF THE DOVE



have done. While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease."

Noah and his family were now alone in the earth. Perhaps they feared that the beasts, which they saved in the ark, and which were now allowed to roam where they pleased, would multiply faster than men, and become dangerous. If this were the case, God removed their fears, for he said to them: "The fear of you, and the dread of you, shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, and upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hands are they delivered." He told them, concerning their food, that "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things."

"And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying: And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there be a flood any more to destroy the earth." "I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud. And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and



you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh."

The rainbow, which we see so beautifully spanning the heavens, is, then, God's love-token to the earth. It should lead us to love him, and then our happy hearts will ever feel the tokens of his love manifested within. Children often imagine that angels are flying around that glorious bow in the skies. They can sing:—

"It seems, unto my childhood's sight,
A midway station given,
For happy spirits to alight
Betwixt the earth and heaven."

Noah, after the flood, planted a vineyard and became a husbandman. And he lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood. His whole life was nine hundred and fifty years. And he died in faith, a good man, full of years.

The following interesting account of the flood, written in rhymes, many years ago, by one who loved the young, and wrote many excellent things for them, will impress the whole story more deeply upon the mind:—

"The world grew worse as old it grew;
Sin gathered strength, grew bolder too;
Long-suffering patience now was past,
Th' appalling sentence comes at last:
'My spirit shall not always strive,
No further respite will I give.'

God bids a refuge straight prepare
For those his goodness meant to spare.
Blest Noah and his favored race,
Alone obtain the special grace.
A picture of *our* world remark,
In those who labored in the ark;

A stronger instance need we find
 Of the hard heart of base mankind?
 However assiduously they wrought,
 No builder his own safety sought;
 A century was the task pursued,—
 Not one his own destruction viewed;
 Oh, blind, God's menaced blow to slight!
 What! perish with the ark in sight?
 See God his awful threat'ning keep,
 Break up the fountains of the deep;
 Remove the limits long assigned
 Th' encroaching waters fast to bind!
 Heaven's windows open, lo, the sky
 Pours down its deluge from on high!
 The floods that rise, the floods that fall
 Meet at one point and cover all;
 All cry, none aid; with anguish wild
 The frantic mother grasps her child.

The weak their safety seek below,
 The rapid waves above them flow;
 The strong attempt the mountain's steep,
 The mountains are become the deep.
 Half dead with famine, half with fear,
 Now few, and fewer now appear!
 All strive, all sink; sink beasts and men:
 Perished each living substance then.
 Existence is extinct! the world
 Itself to dire destruction hurled.
 Good Noah's house alone remained;
 The waves his floating ark sustained.

There is an ark that's open still,
 Where all may shelter if they will;
 That ark is Christ, a refuge true;
 Let all by faith keep him in view."

THE TOWER OF BABEL.



OD commanded the children of Noah to scatter into different parts of the earth, that it might be filled with inhabitants. But as they journeyed, they came to a plain in the land of Shinah. Here they resolved to make a great city, and build a very high tower; they thought to make themselves very famous, and to make their city and tower so attractive that the people would stay there. They did not wish to be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. So they be-

gan to build. They had no stones, but "they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar." See how their king and great men consult together, while the laborers toil away with great diligence. They say, in their pride, "We will build a tower whose top may reach unto heaven." They were all one people, and spoke one language; but God was not pleased to have them dwell together in one place. And he said he would take notice of what they were doing. So, "The Lord came down to see the city, and the tower which the children of men builded." For a while he did not hinder them. They went on their own way, growing prouder of their works every day. They thought too much of their own wisdom to consult God. He was not in all their thoughts. But see in what an unexpected way to them all their plans are defeated. God confounded their language, so that they could not understand one another. They were made to speak in different languages, so they could not proceed with their work. They then left off building their city, and scattered abroad throughout all the face of the earth.

Perhaps these foolish builders thought that this tower would be a safe place, if there should be another flood. How vain a shelter would it have been! "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe."



THE TOWER OF BABEL.



A B R A H A M.

MANY years after the flood, there was a good man, living in a country east of Canaan, by the name of Abram; this name God changed to Abraham. The fathers of Abraham were worshippers of idols, but he knew and obeyed the one only and true God. Soon after his father Terah's death, God commanded Abraham to leave his own country, and to go into a land which he should show him. This command he cheerfully and instantly obeyed. He took his wife Sarai, whom God afterwards called Sarah, and his brother's son, Lot, and his cattle, and all that he had, and went into the land of Canaan. Here the Lord appeared unto Abraham, and said: "Unto thy seed will I give this land. And there builded he an altar unto the Lord who appeared unto him."

Soon after this, there was a great famine in the land of Canaan, and Abraham went down into Egypt. Then Pharoah, king of Egypt, took Sarah from Abraham, because she was very beau-

tiful, and brought her into his own house. "And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues, because of Sarah, Abraham's wife." So the king sent away Abraham in peace, with his wife, and Lot, and with all that he had. "And Abraham was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold," and he journeyed until he came to Bethel where he had before builded an altar. "And there Abraham called upon the name of the Lord."

"And Lot, also, who went with Abraham, had flocks and herds and tents. And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together; for their substance was great, so they could not dwell together." And the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot strove together.

Then Abraham, though he was Lot's uncle, and much the greater man, and might have claimed a choice of places, very generously said to Lot: "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen, for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me; if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will take the right; or, if thou wilt depart to the right hand, I will go to the left." How unlike those persons who always seek the best for themselves!

Lot was more selfish, and chose the plains of Jordan, because they were well watered everywhere, "even as the garden

of the Lord." He seemed to desire rich pastures and greater flocks of sheep and more numerous herds of cattle, and so forgot the evils of the bad company into which he was going; for "the men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." We shall see how unwise such a choice was.

When Lot was separated from him, God appeared again unto Abraham and said, "Arise and walk through the land, in the length of it, and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee." And he went and dwelt in Hebron.

After this, several kings made war against the king of Sodom, and the kings who were his friends; and the king of Sodom was defeated in battle, and all the goods of those who followed him were taken; and Lot and all that was his were taken, too, and carried away. See what trouble his desire for rich pastures brought upon him! When all this was told Abraham, he armed his three hundred and eighteen household servants, and pursued the conquerors, and defeated them, took their spoil, and brought back Lot and all his goods. So the generous Abraham was stronger than the selfish Lot, even when Lot had several kings to help him!

Now, after these things, word came unto Abraham in a vision, saying, "Fear not, Abraham; I am thy shield, and exceeding great reward. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars if thou be



able to number them. And he said unto him, so shall thy seed be."

Now Abraham had no child, and he and Sarah were old: yet, "he believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness."

Many years after this, the Lord appeared again unto Abraham. In the heat of the day, he sat in his tent-door. Lifting up his eyes, he saw three men in appearance. It may be they carried staves in their hands, and looked like travellers: so Abraham invited them to come in; he commanded water to be brought to wash their feet, and he set food before them, and they did eat. How pure and loving they seem, as they talk with Abraham! Indeed, they are not mere men; they are heavenly messengers, sent by God to renew his promise to Abraham. They tell him that Sarah shall have a son. After talking awhile with them, Abraham went with his visitors toward Sodom; and two of them left him and went on, and one of them, who is called "the Lord," remained with him.

Now God had determined to destroy Sodom, and the cities of the plains of Jordan, on account of their great wickedness. But he loved Abraham so much that he would not do it without telling him. When Abraham heard of the dreadful judgment about to fall upon them, he began to pray earnestly that the Lord would spare them, and said, "Peradventure there be



ABRAHAM AND THE ANGELS.

—•—•—
fifty righteous in the city; wilt thou also destroy, and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? And the Lord said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes. Then Abraham said, Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous; wilt thou destroy all the city for the lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty-and-five, I will not destroy it. And Abraham spoke unto the Lord yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there? And he said, I will not do it for forty's sake. And he said, Oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there? And he said, I will not do it if I find thirty there. And he said, Behold, now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall twenty be found there? And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake. And he said, Oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there? And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake.

"And the Lord went his way as soon as he had left communing with Abraham; and Abraham returned unto his place.

"And there came two angels to Sodom, at even. And Lot sat in the gate of Sodom; and Lot, seeing them, rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground; and he said, Behold, now, my lords, turn in, I pray

you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat."

Before these angels had lain down to sleep, the people of Sodom, both old and young, came about Lot's house, and called to him, and demanded that he should bring the men who had come to lodge with him out to them, that they might abuse them, and treat them with shameful cruelty. And Lot went out of the door unto them, and shut the door after him, and said, "I pray you, my brethren, do not so wickedly.

"Then they pressed sore upon Lot, and came near to break the door. But the angels put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door.

"And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great; so that they wearied themselves to find the door." Then the angels told Lot to take his family and get out of that place, for God had sent them to destroy it.

"And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters, the Lord



THE ESCAPE FROM SODOM.

being merciful unto him ; and they brought him forth, and set him without the city.

“ And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life ; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain ; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.” But Lot begged to be permitted to tarry in the plains, in a little city called Zoar. So he was permitted ; and he turned aside to Zoar.

“ The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar. Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from God out of heaven ; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.”

Pretty soon after Lot reached Zoar, he left it, and went and dwelt in the mountain, as God at first commanded him. “ For he feared to dwell in Zoar.”

After this, Abraham removed his tents further south. Now Abraham had a son, whose name was Ishmael, and whose mother’s name was Hagar. When Ishmael was fourteen years of age, Abraham had another son, whose name he called Isaac. When Isaac was grown, and was weaned, Abraham made a great feast. And Sarah, Isaac’s mother, saw Hagar mocking. “ Wherefore Sarah said unto Abraham, Cast out the bondwoman and her son. And the thing was



very grievous in Abraham's sight, because of his son. And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight, because of the land and because of thy bondwoman ; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee hearken unto her voice ; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away ; and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. And she went and sat her down over against him a good way off, and lifted up her voice and wept. And the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar ? Fear not ; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thy hand ; for I will make him a great nation.

"And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water ; and she went and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad to drink."

How glad the poor mother must be, as she sits down by the well, and presses her boy to her bosom ! She now knows that he will not die with hunger and thirst in the wilderness. After this, "God was with the lad." That was a great comfort to his mother.



HAGAR AND ISHMAEL.

"And it came to pass, after these things, that God said unto Abraham, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah ; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains that I will tell thee of.

"And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac, his son, and clave the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. Then, on the third day, Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it upon Isaac, his son ; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife ; and they went, both of them together. And Isaac spoke unto Abraham, his father, and said, My father ; and he said, here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire, and the knife ; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering ? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering ; so they went both of them together. And they came to the place which God had told him of ; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac, his son, and laid him upon the altar, on the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son."



At this moment “the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham! and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him, for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns.”

Turn to the picture again. See how the ram struggles to get free; but he is caught in the snare God has set for him, and he cannot escape! The angel points to the ram, and seems to say to Abraham, See! God has provided himself a lamb, as you told Isaac. According to your faith, it is done unto you.

“And Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son.”

And Abraham lived until Isaac was about seventy-five years old, and his whole age was one hundred and seventy-five years. Then Abraham died “in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered unto his people.”





ABRAHAM OFFERING UP ISAAC.



ISAAC AND REBEKAH.

ABRAHAM was now growing old, and the time seemed not far distant when he should rejoin his beloved wife Sarah, to dwell in the presence of the Lord whom he had loved and served all his life. He naturally wished before he died that his son Isaac should be firmly fixed in the land where he himself had dwelt so long, and had risen to such honor and respect. He wished to see Isaac married, and that Isaac's wife should be one of his own kindred, from the house of his brother Nahor, whose descendants lived in Mesopotamia. Therefore Abraham called before him the faithful steward of his household, Eliezer, to swear a solemn oath or promise that he would go and seek a wife for Isaac, and that he would find one among Abraham's relatives, and not take a heathen woman. And Abraham had faith in God, and trusted that he would lead Eliezer to make a wise choice. Eliezer took ten camels, and departed on his journey to seek a wife for Isaac.

And he travelled until he came to a well near a city in Mesopotamia, where the descendants of Nahor, the brother of Abraham, dwelt; and he prayed to the Lord to prosper him, and help

him to make a good choice. It was the time when the women of the city were in the habit of coming to the well to draw water, and Eliezer prayed that the maiden whom the Lord had appointed to be the wife of Isaac might be the one who should offer to give him drink from the well; and the Lord heard and answered him, for, before he had finished speaking, Rebekah, the granddaughter of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came down to the well. She was a very beautiful maiden, and Eliezer ran to meet her, and begged for a little water out of her pitcher. She replied, "Drink, my lord," and offered to draw water for his camels. Eliezer now felt sure that he was right in his choice, and he presented her with golden bracelets and earrings as soon as he found whose daughter she was, and he rejoiced in the Lord who had directed him in the right way.

Bethuel, the father of Rebekah, and Laban, her brother, saw that the Lord had directed Eliezer, therefore they freely consented that Rebekah should return with him, and be Isaac's wife. In the morning he begged them to dismiss him; for he was anxious to return to his master Abraham with the good tidings. Laban and the mother of Rebekah were loath to part with the damsel so soon, and begged him to remain with them a few days; but he said, "Hinder me not, seeing the Lord hath prospered my way;" and they gave Rebekah their blessing, and sent her away with him. And Isaac went out to meet them; and he took Rebekah for his wife, to comfort him for the loss of Sarah, his mother.



REBEKAH AT THE WELL.



ESAU AND JACOB.

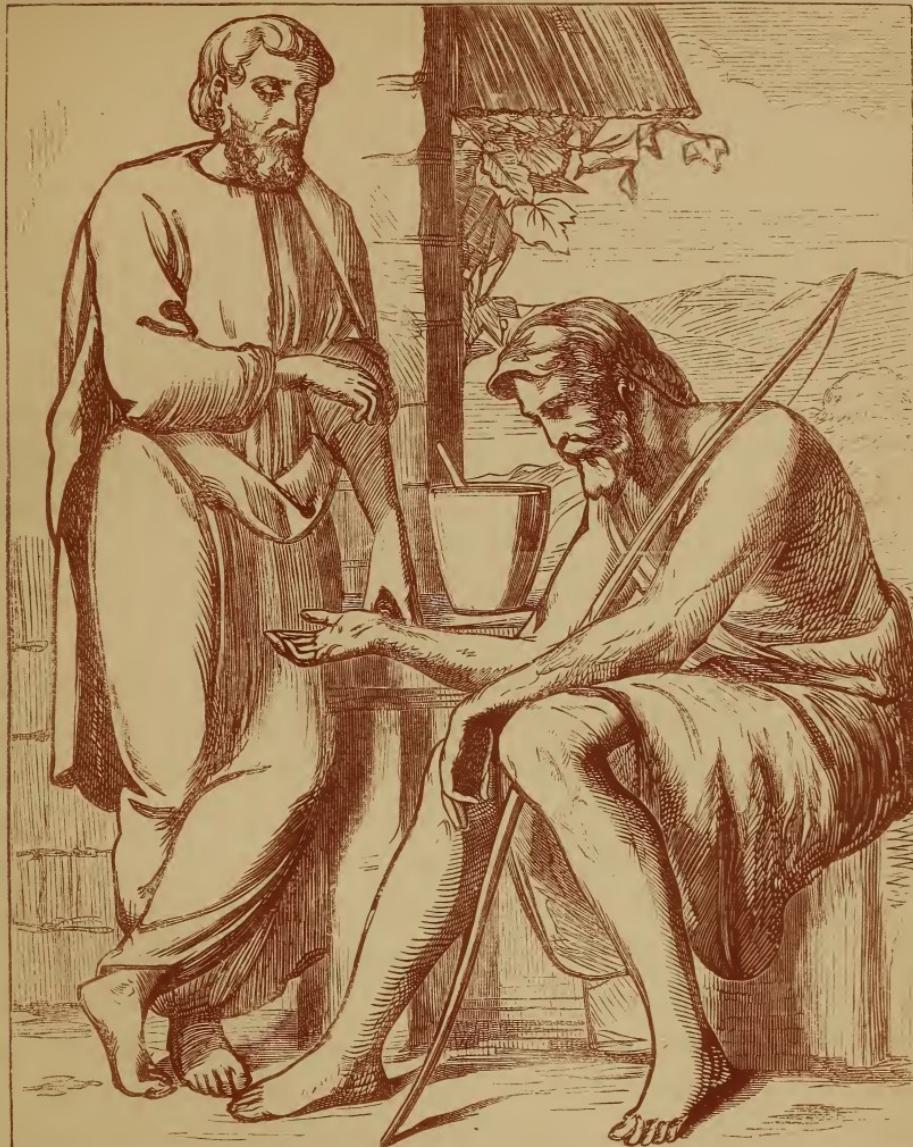
THE Lord blessed Isaac, and gave him two sons, and he called them Esau and Jacob. Esau was the elder, and he was a hunter, and Jacob was a keeper of flocks of sheep and cattle. Esau brought venison to his father, and his father loved him, but Jacob was his mother's favorite.

As Esau was the oldest son, it was his right, according to the custom of those times, to inherit from his father, when he should die, the greater part of all his wealth: his cattle and servants, and gold and silver. This was called his *birthright*. Jacob desired that it should be his instead of Esau's, and he contrived to buy it of him in this way: One day Esau had been out hunting, and had come home very tired and hungry, and found that Jacob had made some red pottage. He begged Jacob to give him some, but Jacob refused, unless Esau would give him his birthright in exchange for it. Esau was very hungry, and had not the firmness to resist the temptation, and was foolish enough to sell his birthright for one dish of food.



He was very sorry indeed afterwards, but he had sworn an oath to Jacob, and it was too late: he had lost all his right to his father's great wealth! It was very wicked for Jacob to take advantage of his brother's hunger to deprive him of his rights, and he was afterwards punished for it, as you will see if you read the history of his after life.

In many ways Esau was thoughtless and wicked, and he grieved his parents by marrying two heathen women, instead of the women of his own nation. When Isaac became old, and his eyes became dim, he sent for Esau, and said to him, "I am old, and do not know how soon I may die;" and he desired Esau to go out hunting, and bring him some venison, to give him strength; and he promised to give him his blessing. But Rebekah heard him, and she wished Jacob to have the blessing instead of Esau. So she went and found Jacob, and told him to go and bring two kids from the flock, and she prepared some very nice food from them, and told Jacob to go and give it to his old father, Isaac, and ask for his blessing. Jacob reminded his mother that Esau's skin was rough and hairy, whereas his own was smooth, and that his father would find out the deception, and curse him instead of blessing him. But Rebekah said, "Upon me be thy curse, my son." So she put Esau's clothes upon Jacob, and put the skins of the kids upon his hands and neck, and sent him with the food to Isaac. So they deceived Isaac, and he gave Jacob the blessing, telling him that he should be lord over his



ESAU SELLING HIS BIRTHRIGHT.

brother, and praying God to give him prosperity and plenty. When Esau returned, he prepared food for his father, and came expecting to receive the blessing; and he was exceedingly sorry, and very bitter and angry when he found that Jacob had deceived his father, and defrauded him of his blessing as well as his birthright. He begged very sorely for another blessing, and his father gave him one, but not such a blessing as he had given Jacob. He then was wicked enough to form a plan to kill Jacob, and so get back what Jacob had deprived him of. But Rebekah heard of this, and sent Jacob away to Laban, her brother, and they never saw him again, for he did not dare return for fear of Esau. So Jacob was punished for his deception by being sent away from his home and friends, and, afterwards, he was deceived by his uncle, and when he was old he was deceived by his own sons. All this came upon him to repay his own sin of defrauding his brother and deceiving his father. When he fled for fear of Esau, he travelled to Padan-aram, where Laban, his uncle, lived, and he met a maiden coming with a flock of sheep, and he watered the sheep at a well for her, and found that she was Rachel, the daughter of Laban. And he was greatly rejoiced; and Laban, his uncle, came out to meet him, and welcomed him with kind words. And Laban proposed that Jacob should stay with him, and serve him, and asked what wages he would have. Jacob agreed to stay, and serve him seven years, if he would give him his beautiful daughter, Rachel, to be his wife: and Laban promised to do so. Jacob did

as he agreed ; and so much did he love Rachel, that the seven years seemed but a few days to him. But when he came to claim her, his uncle refused to give her to him, and said he could not have her until Leah, her older sister, was married. So Jacob had to marry Leah, and serve another seven years for Rachel.

But the Lord prospered Jacob, and he grew to a very wealthy man. But Laban and his sons became very jealous of him ; so he took his flocks and herds, and his two wives, and started for his own country. But he was afraid to meet Esau, his brother, whom he had so wronged when he was a young man, and he sent him presents to appease his wrath. The night before he was to meet Esau, there appeared to him an angel as he sat alone ; and this angel wrestled with him until the break of day : but Jacob at last obtained a blessing from him, and he found it was the Lord himself. And the Lord remembered his promise to Jacob, and said he was no longer to be called Jacob, but Israel. Therefore, the descendants of Jacob are called children of Israel.

When Esau met Jacob, he acted very generously. He received his brother very kindly, and fell on his neck, and kissed him ; and they were always good friends afterwards. If Esau had faults, he had also the kindness of heart to forgive an injury. This is a good trait of character, and one we should all try to have.



ISAAC BLESSING JACOB.



J O S E P H.

HE youngest but one of the twelve sons of Jacob was called Joseph. Jacob was more than ninety years of age when he was born. Because he was the son of his old age, he loved him more than he loved his other children, and made him a coat of many colors. When Joseph's brethren saw that their father loved him more than he loved them, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

When Joseph was about seventeen years old, he had two remarkable dreams. No doubt they were given him by God to teach him and his friends that he would become a great ruler. He dreamed that he and his brethren were binding sheaves in a field, and that his sheaf stood upright, while their sheaves stood round about and made obeisance to his sheaf.

Joseph told this dream to his brethren, and they hated him yet more, saying, "Shalt thou indeed reign over us?"

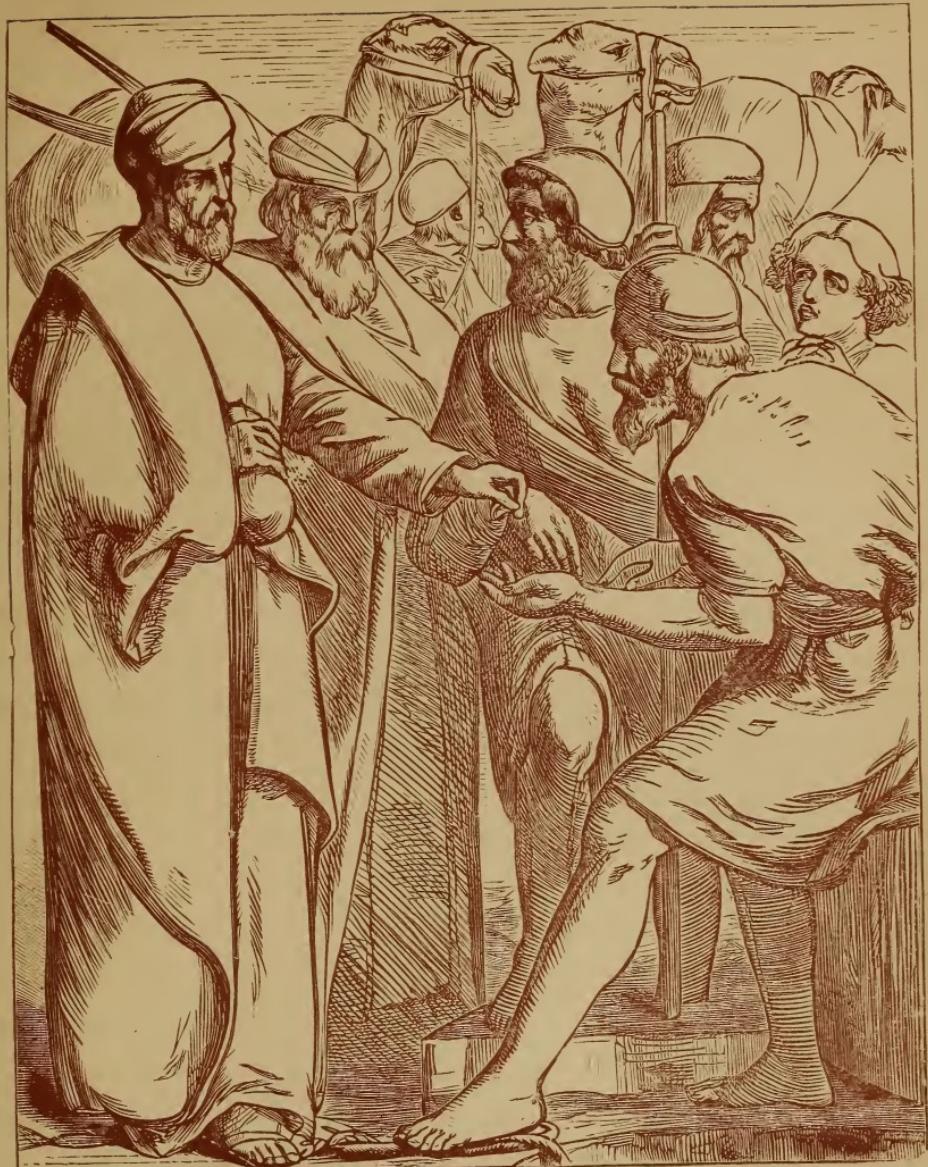
And Joseph dreamed yet another dream, and told it to his father



and his brethren, saying, "I dreamed that the sun and moon and eleven stars came and made obeisance to me." Then his father rebuked him, saying, "Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come and bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? His brethren envied him; but his father thought much of these dreams, not knowing perhaps exactly what they meant, yet thinking that they promised some great things for his favorite son.

About this time, his brethren went away with Jacob's flocks to find pasture for them in a distant place. After a while, their father became anxious about them, and sent Joseph to inquire if it was well with them, and well with the flocks.

When Joseph came in sight of his brethren, they said to one another, "Here comes the dreamer! Let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and say a wild beast hath devoured him, and we will see what will become of his dreams." But Reuben, the oldest brother, was not as cruel as the others. He said, "Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit which is in the wilderness." He said this that he might rid him out of their hands, and deliver him to his father again. So the brethren consented; and when Joseph was come to them, they seized him, and stripped him of his coat of many colors, and put him into the pit, thinking, no doubt, that he would starve to death there. They then sat down to eat bread; and, lifting up their eyes, they saw a company of Arabian merchants, with their camels loaded with spices, and balm, and myrrh,



SELLING JOSEPH.

going into Egypt. Seeing them, one of the brothers said, "Come, let us sell Joseph to these merchants;" and the rest were contented to do so. Then they lifted Joseph out of the pit, and sold him to the merchants for about fifteen dollars. Look at the picture! How mean the brother looks who is taking the money! The whole company, except Joseph, appear like a band of miserable slave-holders, as they are! The noble camels lift up their heads and look in another direction, as if ashamed of their masters!

Poor Joseph seems sad! He is thinking, perhaps, of his dear father; of the cruel slavery in Egypt, into which he knows he is going. But he has been taught to trust in God, and this trust is a great comfort to him in his lonely situation.

Joseph was brought down into Egypt; and Potiphar, an Egyptian, an officer of Pharaoh's guard, bought him of the merchants; and the Lord was with him, and he was a prosperous man. When his master saw that the Lord was with him, he put all that he had into his hands, and God blessed the whole house of Potiphar for Joseph's sake.

Now Joseph was a very beautiful young man, and his master's wife tried to make him commit a great sin against God. But he refused as often as she made her requests, until, at last, she became very angry, and told a lying story against him to his master. This story his master believed, and he cast Joseph into prison. But God was still with him, and gave him favor in the sight of the

keeper of the prison, who set him over all his prisoners, and all of his affairs.

After these things, two servants of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, his chief baker and chief butler, offended the king, and were cast into prison, where Joseph was; and each of them one night had a remarkable dream. In the morning, they were very sad, and told Joseph their dreams. The chief butler said, "In my dream, behold, a vine was before me; and in the vine were three branches; and it was as though it budded, and its blossoms shot forth; and the clusters brought forth ripe grapes; and the king's cup was in my hand; and I took the grapes, and pressed them into the cup, and gave the cup into the king's hand."

Then Joseph told him that the branches meant three days, and that in three days the king would take him out of prison, and restore him to his place as his cup-bearer.

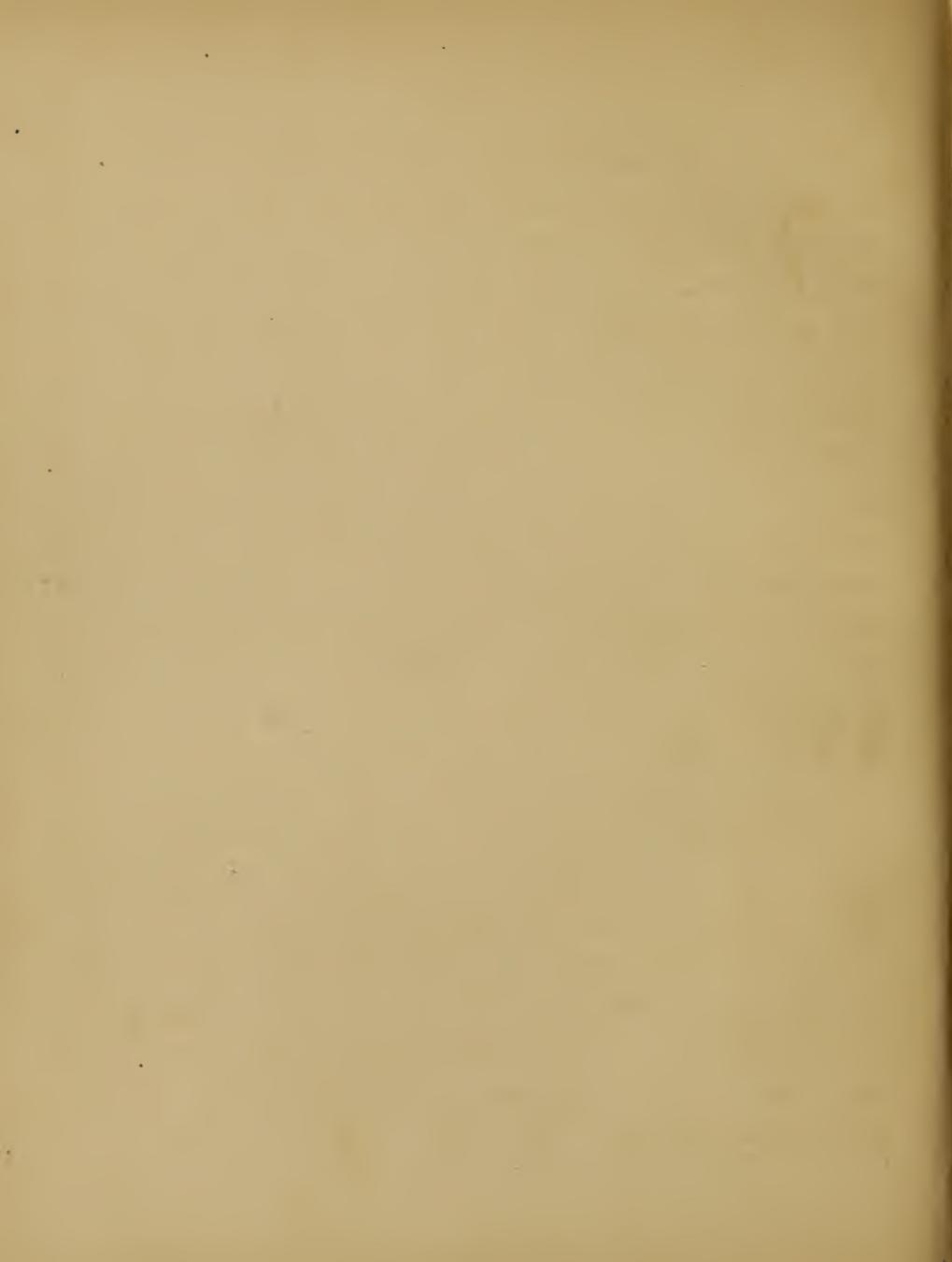
Then the chief baker told his dream, saying, "Behold, I had three white baskets on my head; and in the uppermost basket were all kind of baked meats for the king; and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head."

Then Joseph told the chief baker that his dream meant, that in three days the king would bring him out of prison, and hang him upon a tree, and the birds would eat his flesh from off him.

In three days, all that Joseph had said came to pass; for the king restored the chief butler to his office, and hanged the chief baker. "Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph."



JOSEPH FEEDING THE PEOPLE.



Two years after this, God gave King Pharaoh two very wonderful dreams. He dreamed that seven fat cows came up out of the river and fed in the meadow, and that there came up after them seven lean cows; and the lean cows ate up the fat cows, but were still very lean themselves. Then the king dreamed again, and saw, in his dream, seven good ears of corn on one stock; and after them came seven thin and withered ears, and devoured the good ears.

These dreams very much troubled the king, for none of his wise men could tell him what they meant. Then the chief butler remembered Joseph, and told the king about him; and the king immediately sent for him; and he came and stood before him, and told him the meaning of his dreams, saying, The two dreams teach the same thing. They mean that there will be seven years of great plenty in Egypt; and after them shall come seven years of famine. He advised the king to set a wise man over his affairs, during the seven years of plenty, who should appoint officers to gather the corn from all parts of Egypt, and put it into storehouses for the years of famine. The king was greatly pleased with Joseph, and made him ruler over all the land next to himself.

The seven years of plenty came as Joseph had said, and he gathered up the grain into store cities, for the king, a great quantity.

Then came the years of dreadful famine. The Egyptians soon ate up their old grain, and came to Joseph, to buy for themselves and for their little ones.



Food became more and more scarce, not only in Egypt, but in all the countries round about. In the land of Canaan, where Jacob lived, the famine was terrible; so he said to his sons, Go into Egypt, and buy food for us that we may live. Then all of Joseph's brethren, except Benjamin, came into Egypt.

The ten brethren came into Joseph's presence; and he knew them, but they did not know him; and, as they bowed down before him, he thought of his dream. He spoke roughly unto them to try them, and accused them of being spies, come to see the nakedness of the land. But they said they were true men, being twelve brethren, the sons of one father. Then Joseph told them to take food, and return to their father, and to come back, bringing their youngest brother with them, that he might know that they were true men, and no spies. To try them still further, and to make sure of their return, he commanded that their brother Simeon should be bound before their eyes, and be cast into prison.

Before they left, Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to put every man's money in the sack's mouth.

When they came to their father, they told him all that had happened to them; and, as they opened their sacks, behold, every man's money was in his sack's mouth; and they were still more afraid. Jacob was exceedingly grieved, and said, "Me ye have bereaved of my children; Joseph is not, and Simeon is not; and ye will take Benjamin away."

When, after a short time, all the corn which they brought from Egypt was eaten up, Jacob said to his sons, "Go again, buy us a little food." Judah replied, "The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you." Jacob, seeing that he must let Benjamin go, said to his sons, "Take a present for the governor of Egypt, and return the money which was found in your sacks ; take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man."

Then the ten brothers went again into Egypt. When they arrived, they were kindly received, and Simeon was restored to them, and they all came into Joseph's presence, and bowed down before him. How strangely was his dream fulfilled !

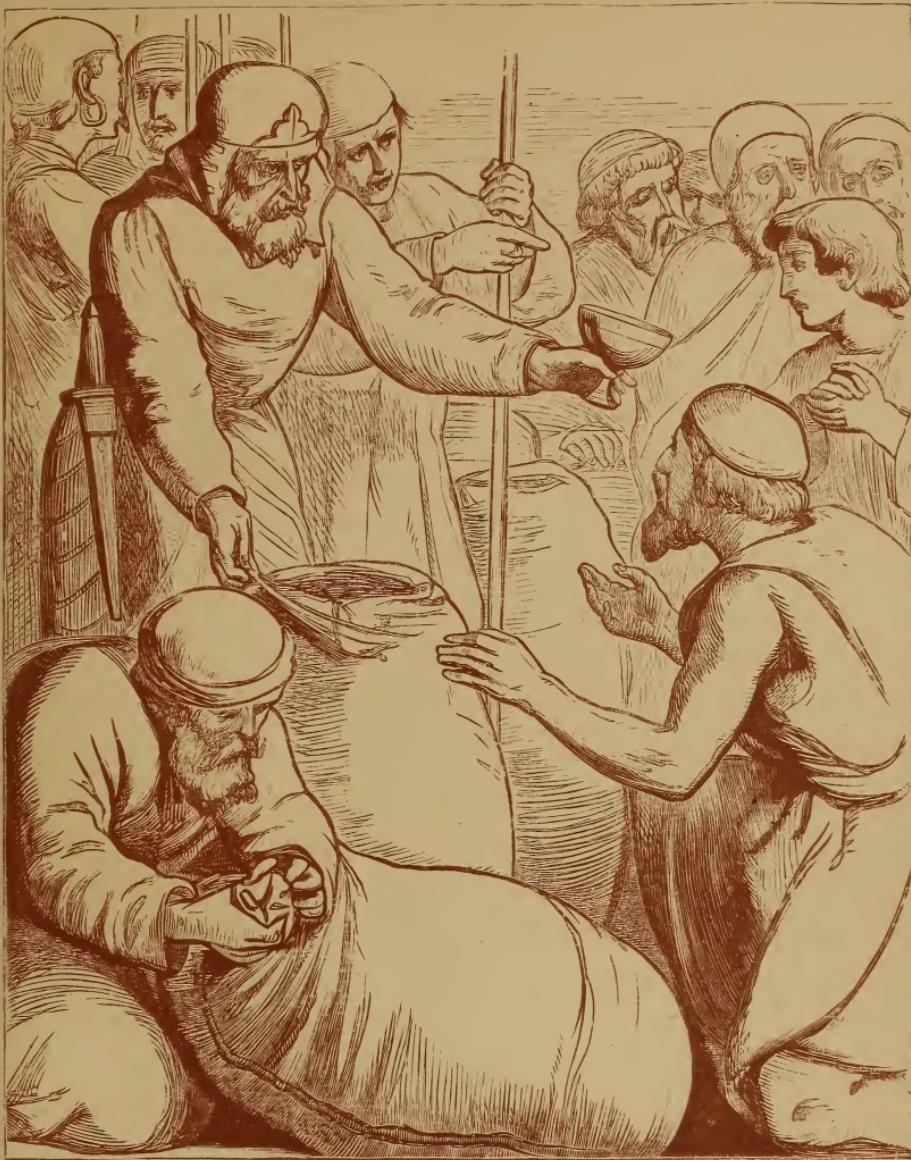
Joseph then asked them of their welfare, and said, "Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake ? Is he yet alive ?" And, lifting up his eyes, he saw his brother Benjamin. "Is this your younger brother of whom ye spake unto me ?" And he said, "God be gracious unto thee, my son." Then Joseph went away and wept ; and he washed his face and refrained himself and returned and said, "Set on bread."

When they were ready to return to their own land, Joseph commanded his stewards to fill their sacks with corn, and to put every man's money in his sack's mouth, as he did before, and to put his silver cup into the sack of Benjamin. When they had gone a short distance, he sent his steward to say to them, "Why have

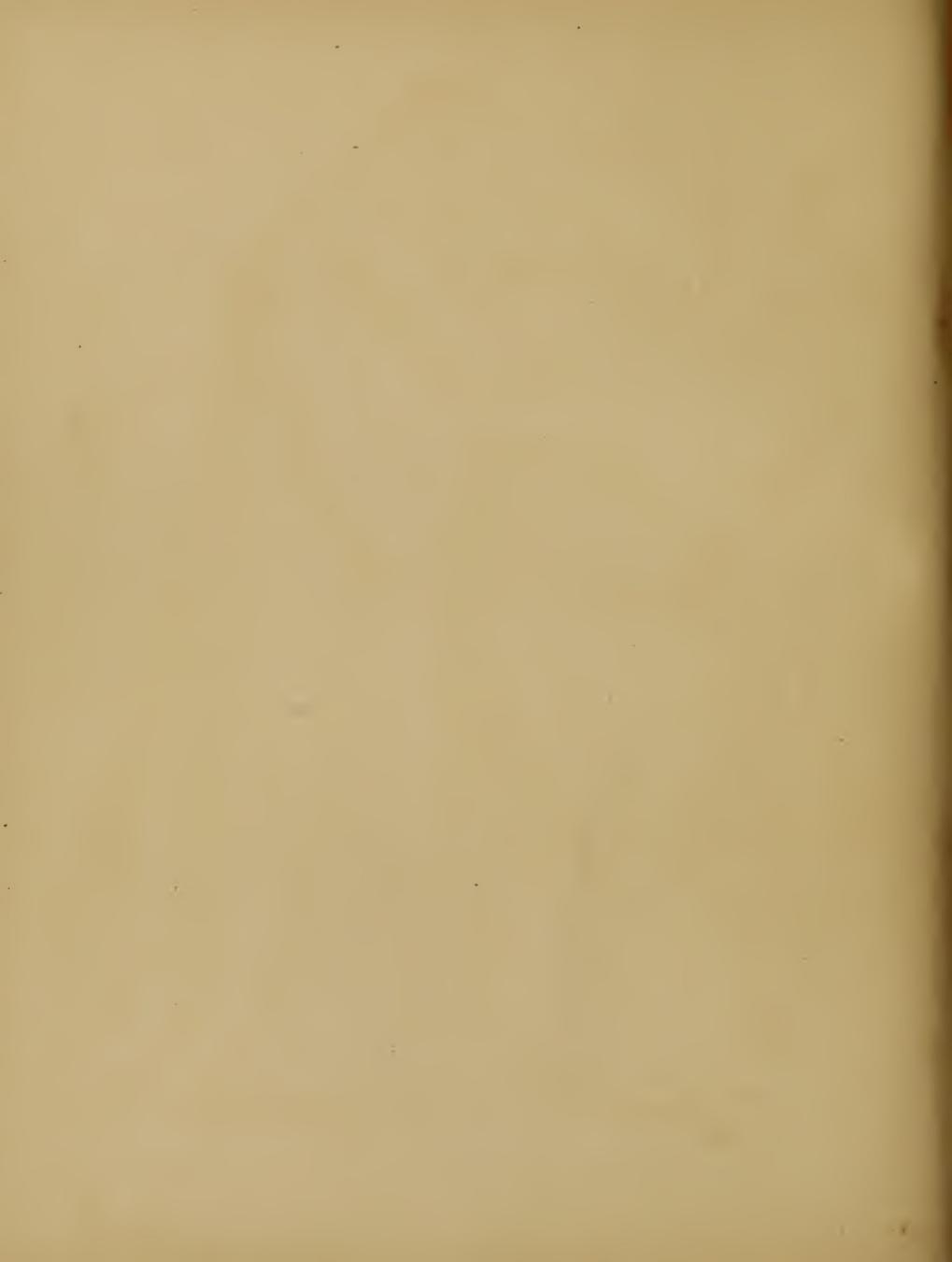
ye rewarded evil for good?" The steward, when he overtook them, repeated what Joseph had said, and charged them with taking his master's silver cup. They were greatly surprised and afraid, and said, "With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my Lord's bondmen." Then the steward examined their sacks, beginning with the eldest, and he found the cup in Benjamin's sack.

What can they say? Judah comes forward with a noble generosity, and pleads very tenderly for his brother Benjamin, whom Joseph proposes to keep as his servant, and let the rest go unto their father in peace; and finally Judah said, "Now, therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide, instead of the lad, a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren."

"Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him, for they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now, therefore, be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life.



THE CUP FOUND.





THE MEETING OF JACOB AND JOSEPH.

"Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt; come down unto me, tarry not.

"And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, and told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not. And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them; and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived. And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die.

"And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while.

"Then Joseph came and told Pharaoh, and said, My father and my brethren, and their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have, are come out of the land of Canaan; and behold they are in the land of Goshen. And he took some of his brethren, even five men, and presented them unto Pharaoh.

"And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

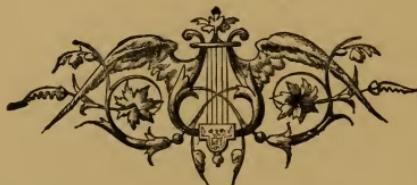
"And Joseph placed his father and his brethren, and gave



them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, as Pharaoh had commanded. And Joseph nourished his father and his brethren, and all his father's household, with bread, according to their families."

Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years, and died, and was carried to the land of Canaan and buried.

Joseph continued to be very kind to his brethren and all their families, after his father's death; and the kindness which he showed to others, God showed to him. He lived in great prosperity until he was one hundred and ten years old, and died; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.





T H E C A P T I V I T Y.

GOD'S people, the Jews, sinned greatly against him. This displeased him exceedingly, for he desired that they should be holy and happy. But he had great patience with them.

When they were sorry for their sins, he forgave them; and when they turned away from him again, he sent his servants the prophets to persuade them to love and obey him. As a kind and loving father weeps over a wicked son, so God stood with his hands extended to his people, crying, "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die, O house of Israel!" He did not delight to have them punished, but when they refused to hear him, he exclaimed, "How shall I give you up!"

Most of the great men of the Jews—their kings, their priests, and the leaders of their armies—rebelled against God with the common people. Yet a few of their kings were holy, seeking to do as God commanded them. Then the people forsook their idols, and God loved them. Such kings were Asa, Hezekiah, and Josiah.

Josiah was the last of these good kings. He was a child, only eight years of age, when he became king; but probably the good high priest, Hilkiah, performed the duties which belonged to the king, until Josiah was old enough to understand them.

Josiah began when he was very young to do that which was pleasing in the sight of God. When he was twenty-six years of age, the Holy Book of God, which he gave to Moses, was found in the temple. It had been hid a long time. When this book was read to Josiah, he was afraid, and wept exceedingly, because the kings which were before, and the people, had not done as this book commanded them. He sent into every part of his kingdom, and gathered the rulers to the temple, and a great multitude of people came up to Jerusalem with them. Then Josiah promised, and caused all the people to promise, to love and obey God. He burned all their idols, broke down all the groves where they worshipped them, removed all the priests of the idols, and broke down the houses of other wicked men.

All the time that Josiah was king, thirty-one years, the people kept their promise to serve the true God; but when he was dead, they turned again to their idols.

God tried them after this with four more kings; but they and their kings sinned continually. For their sins, God sent the king of Babylon to Jerusalem, and he took the city. He carried their king away to Babylon, with all their great men, and all their men



GOING INTO CAPTIVITY.

of war, and all their workmen, such as carpenters, masons, and blacksmiths, and left only the poor people in the land. He took also the gold and silver, and all the wonderful things of their temple, and put them in his own treasure-house. A few years afterward, he came again, and burned the temple and threw down the walls of Jerusalem. A sad day was that to the poor Jews when they were compelled to leave their homes, and go far away into a strange country. See them in the picture! How sad they look! There were little children on foot in that long and mournful procession, led by their older brothers or sisters. With them were the weeping mothers, and the long-bearded men whose fierce-looking faces seemed to say that they still hated God. The soldiers rode behind on horseback, to urge forward the weary captives. Among them, were some great and holy men, for the good often suffer in this world with the wicked. Daniel was there, who became a great ruler in the land of his captivity, and to whom God gave a wonderful escape from the lions' den. Ezekiel, the prophet, was with them, too, and Mordecai, of whom we shall tell you in the next story.





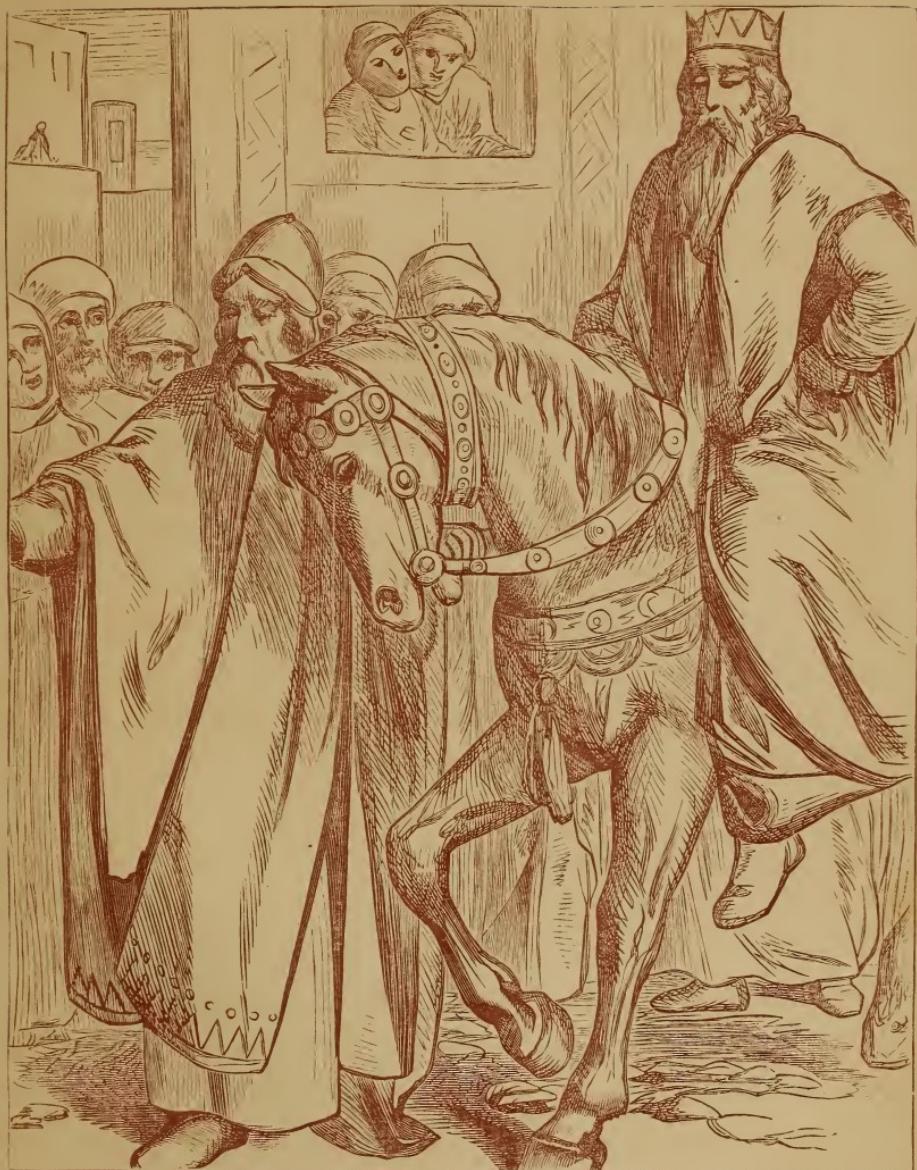
ESTHER AND MORDECAI.



HE king who carried the Jews into captivity died, and a king of another nation took possession of his country. His name was Ahasuerus, and he lived in the city of Shushan, where he had wonderful gardens and a splendid palace.

In this city many of the captive Jews resided; among them were Mordecai and his cousin Esther. Esther was an orphan, and Mordecai had brought her up as his own child. She was very beautiful and very affectionate. She loved Mordecai, and obeyed him as if he had been her own father.

At one time, the king made a great feast for many days for his great men. He showed them his riches, and talked with them of his honors and great power. After this, he made a great feast for all the people of his palace, both great and small. At these feasts, they drank much wine from golden vessels. At length the king became very merry with wine. While he was thus drunk, he commanded his servants to bring his beautiful queen, Vashti,



MORDECAI'S TRIUMPH.

and show her to the people. The queen, like a sensible person, refused to come. If the king had not been full of wine, he would, no doubt, have loved her better for her modesty; but now he was very angry, and took away her royal garments, and commanded that she should no longer be queen.

After this, the king sent into all parts of his kingdom, and gathered together all the young women of great beauty, to the city of Shushan, where they were committed to the care of one of his great officers. From these, the king intended to select the one who pleased him best, to be queen instead of Vashti.

Among these young women was Esther, to whom the officer showed great kindness, taking great pains to make her appear attractive to the king. When she was brought to the king, she pleased him greatly, and he made her queen.

There was a man at this time in Shushan whose name was Haman. The king delighted in him above all his chief men, and gave him great riches and honor; but Haman was exceedingly wicked. The king commanded that all the people should bow down and reverence Haman, whenever they saw him. But Mordecai, who was daily at the gate of the palace, refused to do so. The servants of the king were astonished at this, and proud Haman was full of wrath. But none of them knew that Mordecai was related to Queen Esther, or that the queen was a Jew. Haman resolved that he would cause all the Jews to be put to death in

revenge for Mordecai's refusal to honor him. So he went to the king with cunning and lying words, saying that there was a people, scattered throughout his kingdom, which did not obey the laws of the land, meaning the Jews; and asked permission to have them destroyed. This wicked request the king granted, and Haman made haste to command, in the king's name, that, on a certain day, the people among whom the Jews lived, should kill them, not sparing even the women and little children. But see now how God defeated his plans! When Mordecai heard that his people were to be destroyed, he put on his mourning garments, and went into the city, and cried a loud and bitter cry. He went even to the gate of the king's palace, and wept aloud. The maids of Queen Esther saw him, and told her. She then sent her chief officer to Mordecai to inquire the cause for mourning, for Esther had not heard of Haman's plan to destroy her people. So Mordecai made known to her the whole matter, and requested her to go immediately to the king and beg him to spare her nation. She replied, that if she went into the presence of the king without being called, she would be put to death, except the king reached out to her the golden sceptre. Mordecai replied that she must venture. Then Esther requested Mordecai and all the Jews in the city to continue in fasting and prayer during three days, while she and her servants did the same; and she added: "I will then go in unto the king, and if I perish, I will perish." But the king did not



ESTHER AND THE KING

command her head to be cut off when she came into his presence. He reached out the golden sceptre; that meant that he was not angry to have her come uninvited into his presence. The king told her to ask what she pleased, and he would grant her request. She, at this time, simply requested that the king and Haman should come that day to a banquet which she had prepared. This the king and Haman did. At the banquet, the king said to Esther, "Ask what you will, and I will do it." Esther replied that if he and Haman would come to another banquet, on the next day, she would then make known her request. Haman went home more proud than ever to think that the queen had invited him only, with the king, to her banquet. But Mordecai bowed not to him as he passed along. This alone marred all his pleasure. He was so angry that he built a very high gallows, and came the next day to ask the king's permission to hang Mordecai upon it. But God's eye was upon him, and he disappointed his wicked purpose! That night the king could not sleep, and he called for the books, in which was written an account of the remarkable things which had happened since he became king. He there found that Mordecai had once saved his life. It happened in this way: Two of the king's servants had laid a plan to kill him. This Mordecai found out, and caused the king to know it. So these servants were hanged, and the king's life saved. When Haman came in the morning to request that Mordecai might

be hanged, the king said to him : “ What shall be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honor ? ” Haman, thinking that the honor must be intended for himself, advised that the royal garment be brought, and the horse which the king rode, and that the man in whom the king delighted should be clothed in this garment, and made to ride through the streets of the city, while the king’s messengers went before him, shouting, “ Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor.” “ So,” said the king, “ do all that you have said, to Mordecai, the Jew ! ” Poor Haman ! See how humbled he appears, while he leads the royal horse ! How like a king Mordecai looks, with the crown upon his head, while the people gaze at him in wonder. Haman went to Esther’s feast after this, but with a sorrowful heart. God had begun to punish him, and he was afraid !

At the feast, the king asked Esther again, what she desired. Esther exclaimed, “ Let my life be given to me at my petition, and my people at my request ; for we are sold, I and my people, to be slain ! ” The king was greatly excited, and replied, “ Who is he, and where is he, that hath dared to do so ? ” Then Esther answered, “ The enemy is this wicked Haman ! ” See how boldly she approaches the king while she pleads for her life, and the life of her people ! The king was very angry at Haman, and commanded that he should be hanged upon the gallows he had made for Mordecai.” Then he made Mordecai a great ruler, and saved the Jews but destroyed their enemies.

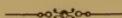


AFTER THE CAPTIVITY.



RETURNING HOME.

SEVENTY weary years were the Jews in Babylon. Their sorrows made them think of their sins, and the sins of their kings and priests, and the sins of their whole nation. On this account, they fasted much, and prayed sincerely for forgiveness. God heard and answered their prayers, as he always does the prayers of sinners who come humbly to him. God gave the country where they lived into the hands of a great general by the name of Cyrus, and he became its king. God caused him to feel great pity and love for the Jews, and to desire to send them back to their own land. This he did; and he gave them the gold and silver vessels which had been taken from the temple seventy years before, and he also commanded the people of Babylon to give them things necessary for their journey. After the Jews had been in their own land a few months, they began to rebuild the temple. The altar was first erected, and the sacrifices offered upon it. The priest stood by with his beautiful garments, his hands



and eyes raised to heaven, and his heart full of sincere gratitude to God. The Levites gathered about the altar, with their instruments of music. See how earnestly they play, while the smoke of the sacrifice rolls grandly to heaven, as if it bore their songs to the ears of God! But who are those whose heads are bowed down? Why are they so sad while their brethren rejoice? Ah! they are the old men, who saw the first temple seventy years ago. They are thinking how beautiful that was, and that they shall never see one like it, yet they are glad they are to have a new one.

Soon after, Cyrus, the good friend of the Jews, died, and then their enemies started up and made many bitter complaints against them to the new king. The king heard their complaints, and compelled the Jews to stop building the temple. But God watched over it, and in a few years it was finished, and a great feast was made, and the people of God rejoiced with great joy.



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